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THE CANADIAN CHAMPION

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 28, 1996

## Peewees pull off huge upset win in series with Fergus

The Feherguard minor peewee Winterhawks left the regular season behind last week and upset heavily favored Fergus in the opening round of their OMHA playdowns.

While dropping five straight games to their opposition this year, Milton jumped out to a great series start and eventually toppled the Fergus giants in six games.

Local fans couldn't have asked for a more exciting conclusion to the series, as Robbie Falls slammed home the game winner to give his club a thrilling 4-3 victory. Also scoring in the series clincher were Chris Dumencu, Justin Tingley and James Wellstead.

Milton's final victory followed two lopsided defeats to push the series to its limit. The 'Hawks came up blank in games four (5-0) and five (8-0), as a desperate Fergus crew pulled out all the stops to fight off elimination for as long as they could.

Perhaps the biggest game of the series for Milton, besides

the final showdown, was game three's come-from-behind 5-4 overtime win — with the 'Hawks managing to erase a 3-0 deficit with a late offensive surge.

Wellstead came up with the winner in this contest, at 8:23 of the extra frame. Trevor Ford popped in the tying marker. Counting the others were Tingley, Falls and Ryan Clarkson.

Game two ended in a 4-4 draw while Milton jumped out of the gate with a 5-3 decision in game one. Adam Creighton was the offensive star over the first two games with five goals, including a successful penalty shot, while Falls, Tingley, Ford and Cameron Cashmore added singles.

Collecting three assists in game one was Kevin Sales. Turning in solid goaltending efforts all series long were Jon Reid and Josh Dickson.

The 'Hawks will now take on the Acton Sabres, who finished first over the regular season.

## Bantam hawks hit quarterfinals

The Total Team Image major bantam Winterhawks have advanced to the OMHA quarterfinals, after bumping off the Burlington Oilers last week in their best-of-five series.

Milton put the finishing touches on the series in game five with a come-from-behind 7-4 decision. A four-goal attack through the third period, combined with clutch goaltending from Mike Johnston, helped them erase a 4-3 deficit to eliminate Burlington.

Blair Beaulieu turned a hat-trick in the final game to lead the 'Hawks to victory. Coming up with singles were Cory Leigh, Jeff Mitchell, Tyler Zemlak and Steve Szafer — who was on the ice for all seven goals.

While taking only one loss

over the five games — a 4-3 defeat in game four — a 4-4 tie in the opener helped push the series the distance. Scoring in game one were Szafer with two and Mitchell and Leigh with one a piece.

Beaulieu, Kevin Miller and Brent Van Loosen counted goals in game four's loss.

Milton was unstoppable through games two and three, claiming 5-1 and 6-0 triumphs respectively. Scoring three times over the two games was Mitchell while Szafer came up with two. Beaulieu, Miller, Leigh, Adam McIsaac, John Springer and Bobby McKnight all contributed with singles.

Turning in some solid goaltending efforts was Kyle Donnan, who was particularly impressive in game two's win.



Milton's Dave Aussem raises his arms in triumph after scoring in Sunday's 5-4 Milton playoff victory. Standing to the left of Aussem is Kevin Lamb. At far left is Robert Gubala.

Photo by GRAHAM PAINE

## Merchants shift it into overdrive

By STEVE LeBLANC  
Special to The Champion

It took them a game to shift out of neutral, but the Milton Merchants are now in the driver's seat in their best-of-seven opening round series with the Hamilton Kilty 'B's.

Milton managed to erase Hamilton's one-game lead with a big 6-3 victory Friday night at Memorial Arena. Again at home two nights later, Milton outdistanced their hosts 5-4 to take the lead.

While only dropping game one 4-3 in overtime, the Merchants' efforts this past weekend were far superior to those of their series opener.

"That was a whole lot better," said head coach Gregg Carrigan, following Friday's triumph. "I was particularly pleased with the defensemen, they made a 100 per cent improvement over game one. They were a little shaky then, but initiated good break-outs and made good pins in our own end tonight.

"We're also back to our regular full lineup. We really count on all four lines on this team."

Carrigan's last comments Friday referred to the long-awaited return of veteran centre Dave Aussem, suspended over a month ago for an altercation in Bramalea.

The 20-year-old's comeback proved to be as big a sparkplug as could be expected. He took less than five minutes to put his team on the scoreboard in the first — with a low slapshot on the powerplay — and then added an insurance marker midway through the final frame, on a low wristshot after intercepting a pass in front.

"I was kind of surprised to score tonight (Friday). I didn't know if I'd have the

touch back this early," said Aussem, who admits the puck probably bounced his way. "I felt I did okay in my first game back. I was really hoping to contribute."

Aussem's efforts helped out in game three's victory as well, as he picked the top right corner with a monster slapshot late in the first period.

On this night however, it was sophomore centre Jeff Haydar who was the offensive star. He made a big first-period deflection on the powerplay to give his team the initial advantage and then went upstairs early in the second to give Milton their second lead of the game.

He also made a nice set-up on Mark McPhail's second-period tally.

Along with Aussem and Haydar, the Merchants have gotten production from all four lines so far this series. While the bulk of Hamilton's scoring has come from three players — Eric Ellis, Chris Stevenson and Brian Armes — seven Merchants have scored in the first three games.

Depth, a much stronger checking game and solid efforts by goalie Dave Dolecki have been the big differences thus far. Dolecki came up big Friday for their first win and made some clutch saves in the closing minutes of Sunday's showdown.

Special team play has also been a factor so far. Milton has killed 17 of 20 penalties over the three games and have managed to score two powerplay goals in each. While their penalty killing efforts were never in question, an intensified powerplay showing has been a pleasant surprise.

Milton held the lead through all three periods Friday, getting to goalie Ryan Geekie early with slapshots and then penetrating Hamilton's defensive unit in the second and third periods.

The home team also displayed their physical dominance over the "B's" as well, when a number of fights ensued in the third. Among them was a tussle between Phil James and Hamilton bad boy Dennis Cybalski — who tried to scare James by whipping his helmet down hard but ended up getting pummeled.

Merchant tough guy Cory Holland couldn't get his opponent, Jody Simmons, to come out of his shell so he just spent a few moments dragging him around like a rag doll. McPhail and Hamilton's Shawn Baltzer also mixed it up.

Along with Aussem's two-goal night, Gubala was a key factor in Friday's win with a goal and two assists. Counting singles were James, Brian Jones and captain Steve Clarke.

Rick MacDonald, who anchored a strong defensive effort with Jeff McArthur, came up with three assists and Richard Reid picked up two helpers.

Adding singles to Haydar's two-goal night Sunday were Aussem, McPhail and James — who scored the game winner early in the third. Gubala drew two more assists to lead playoff scoring with six points.

**A look ahead:** All three games in the series so far have been won by the home team. If this continues, Milton will need all seven games to dispose of Hamilton. Game four was last night (Tuesday) in Hamilton. Results were not available at press time.

Game five will be played Friday at 8 p.m. in Milton and if necessary, game six will go Saturday at 7:30 p.m. in Hamilton. A final seventh game would be played next Tuesday at 8 p.m. in Milton.

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